

**DRAFT**  
**Network Steering Transition Plan**  
**Description of the Network Steering Board and**  
**Transition from the Interim Network Steering Group**

(Version: February 12, 2002)

**Purpose and Scope of the Transition Plan**

The State/Environmental Protection Agency Information Management Workgroup (IMWG) approved the *Blueprint for the National Environmental Information Exchange Network* describing the National Environmental Information Exchange Network (Network) in October 2000, and endorsed the Interim Network Steering Group (INSG) charter in February 2001. One charge of the INSG charter was to develop recommendations on the establishment of a more permanent home for Network steering. This transition plan provides additional details on the Network Steering Board (Board) and the steps needed to start operations.

Specifically, this transition plan identifies the following:

- \$ The current status of Network steering;
- \$ A description of the Board, including draft budget estimates and job descriptions for its staff;
- \$ Steps needed to start-up the Board; and
- \$ The key decisions for States and EPA to make to complete the transition

**Current Status of Network Steering: The Interim Network Steering Group**

Since adoption of the Blueprint, the INSG and its subgroups have steered and administered the Network.

The key responsibilities and activities of the **current** INSG have been:

- \$ Development of the Network Implementation Plan
- \$ Oversight of the Node Beta Project
- \$ Development of a Network Registry / Repository
- \$ Development of TPA guidelines and Templates
- \$ Assessment of State Readiness for Network participation
- \$ Development of XML (eXtensible Markup Language) Training
- \$ Coordination with CDX and other IMWG Action Teams
- \$ Establishment of the Technical Resource Group for Data Exchange Template (DET)

and XML Guidelines

These functions will now be carried out by the Board.

## **Description of the Board**

### **Functions and Activities**

The Board will have the following high-level functions and related activities.

- \$** Network Registry and Repository
  - S** Oversee the operations and maintenance of a Network Registry and Repository (includes finding a new home for the Registry and Repository and mounting software)
  - S** Develop policies for Registry and Repository operation (e.g., policies for posting DETs, etc.) and document them in a registry operations guidelines / users manual
- \$** Network Specifications, Guidelines, and Best Practice Development
  - S** Develop DET guidelines, best practices, and core reference model
  - S** Coordinate with EDSC on guidelines for use of EDSC data standards in Network DETs and registration of DET data elements in the Environmental Data Registry (EDR)
  - S** Develop Network Exchange Protocol and security guidelines
  - S** Conduct follow-on to Node Beta Project activities and develop Network Node technical specifications
  - S** Develop TPA templates and guidelines
- \$** Technical Assistance to Network Partners
  - S** Conduct an assessment of state technical assistance needs and readiness for Network participation
  - S** Develop a technical assistance plan and approach
  - S** Provide limited technical and management/organizational assistance to Network partners to assist with Node and flow implementation (e.g., XML training, workshops, Regional meetings)
- \$** Communications / Outreach
  - S** Coordinate in/outreach efforts, such as a speakers bureau and meetings, and communications with Network partners
  - S** Establish and operate an official Network web site for policy documents, communications, team support, library, and source code repository

## \$ Network Steering and Oversight

- S Track and report to the IMWG on milestones and issues outlined in the Network Implementation Plan
- S Establish a statement of principles for Network Partner responsibilities
- S Establish a system to assess and report to the IMWG on Network costs and performance measures, including performance measures for the Board itself
- S Coordinate with IMWG Action Teams those activities that relate to Network implementation
- S Manage the resources that are made available to the Board to implement the Network and provide Network administration and technical assistance services

## Scope

The Network Steering Board's scope is limited to issues of joint Network policy, procedures, and the administrative support needs of Network operation. The Board's domain is restricted to the interaction between the Nodes of the Network participants (i.e., the Board's domain does not include what is internal to a Network partner, its Node, or information management systems). The Board is focused on ensuring that participants can use the Network for their own purposes. It includes all Network administration functions such as operation of the Network Registry/Repository, recommendations for Network DETs and TPAs, and other joint technical infrastructure features. The following areas are related to the Network Steering Board's work but are **not** within its scope:

- \$ Decisions on broad issues of State and EPA information management, including what information is collected by or exchanged between industries, local governments, States, and EPA, or how that information is used (The IMWG, which has a broader scope than the Board, will continue to engage in these issues on behalf of States and EPA.);
- \$ Formulation of policies internal to a Network partner;
- \$ Bi-lateral disputes or debates over data, its use (e.g., will it be flowed over the Network or not), or conditions of TPAs as they are developed between participants; and
- \$ Internal management of individual Network partner Nodes and internal information management systems.
- \$ Provision of broader technical support or assistance on information technologies, even though they may be indirectly related to the Network. These include data integration, GIS, document management and other innovative efforts. The IMWG is expected to continue to coordinate assistance activities in these and other areas.

Even with these restrictions, the Board's scope is large, and, as detailed in the *Implementation Plan for the National Environmental Information Exchange Network*, very full. The Board, once it has

established its initial workplan and budget may recommend to the IMWG that some of its assistance related activities be delegated to other IMWG groups to allow the Board to focus on core administrative needs.

## **Membership**

The Board will have eight members. The initial Co-Chairs will be Kim Nelson, the Assistant Administrator for EPA's Office of Environmental Information, and Dana Bisbee, the Commissioner (nominated) of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services. In addition, it will have three State representatives and three EPA representatives. Board members will be approved/appointed by the IMWG. Board members will serve a term of two years. Terms will be staggered to provide continuity of membership. The membership will represent a balance of both technical and programmatic policy backgrounds. Given the responsibilities and fiscal authority of the Board, members should be senior executives or managers. As dictated by experience and interest, the Board will seek to include Tribal and local government membership and representatives of other future Network participants.

To ensure continuity of service and demonstrate the importance of the Board's work, the IMWG Co-chairs will serve as the Board's first Co-chairs.

## **Staff and Roles**

The Board will be supported by two dedicated staff. One Board staff member will be an EPA staff person. The other Board staff position will be selected by states and funded by a portion of the Network Administration set aside of the Network Grant program. The EPA staff person will report through EPA management to the Assistant Administrator of the Office of Environmental Information. To whom the state staff person will report is yet to be determined.

Board staff responsibilities shall include the following.

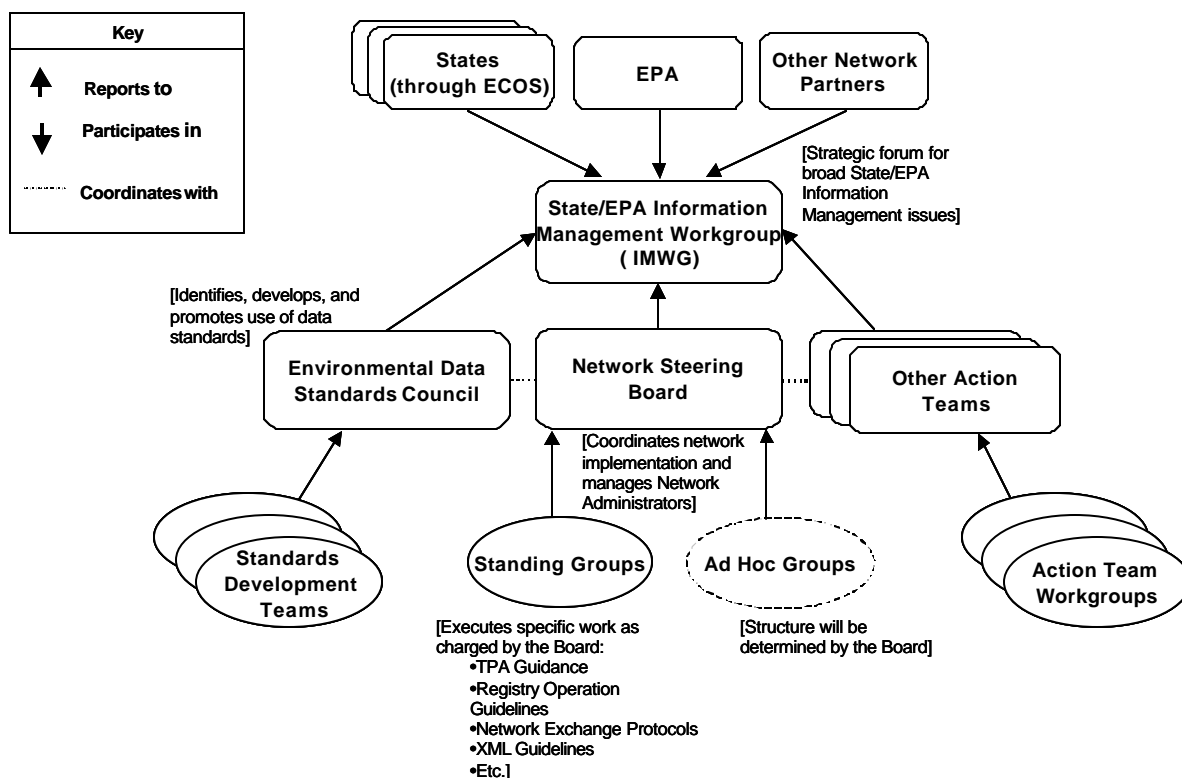
- ❑ Manage contractors supporting the Board and act as primary contact between contractors and the Board
- ❑ Manage and/or oversee operation of the Registry/Repository
- ❑ Coordinate the activities of Board subgroups
- ❑ Manage and/or oversee development and maintenance of the National Environmental Exchange Network web site
- ❑ Act as secretariat for the Board in establishing the agenda of issues for their consideration
- ❑ Schedule and coordinate Board meetings and calls
- ❑ Act as a liaison between the Board and external groups

## Relationships to Other Entities

The Board will be established under the authority of the IMWG, to whom it will report regularly on progress towards the milestones established in the Network Implementation Plan. As well, the Board will establish and report regularly to the IMWG on performance measures for its own operations. This will create transparency and accountability for the Board to the IMWG. The IMWG will retain primary responsibility for monitoring the overall evolution of the Network. In reporting to the IMWG, the Board will also highlight issues identified that are beyond the scope of the Board but should be considered by the IMWG. The Board will coordinate with the IMWG to ensure that, as Network implementation proceeds, the division of responsibilities between the IMWG, its Action Teams, the EDSC and other groups is as clear as possible.

The Board will develop a framework with the EDSC to work together on data standards and DET guidelines.

The following diagram displays the relationship of the Board to other entities.



## **Network Steering and Administration Resources**

To date, two primary sources of support have been provided for Network administration and implementation activities.

- \$ EPA support (in-kind staff participation, contractors, grants, and other resources)
- \$ State support, independently and through ECOS (in-kind staff participation, contractors, and other resources)

For the Network to be successful, it is necessary that the Board and its activities continue to receive the support and involvement of EPA, States, and ECOS. In addition to these past state/ECOS and EPA contributions. In 2001 Congress appropriated \$25M for support of the Network in the form of a Network Grant Program. \$1.5 million of this program has been set aside for Network Steering and Administration. These funds will be in addition State in-kind contributions of staff and contractor resources and will be complemented by continued EPA direct and staff support.

Note that at the last IMWG meeting (November 2001) it was assumed that a joint funding vehicle would be identified to pool grant and EPA resources. This proved impractical. Instead this plan proposes that the EPA and Grant funds be access through separate vehicles, coordinated and directed by the Board. This will allow board operations to accelerate without waiting for entirely new vehicles to be established.

The Network Grant monies are State Technical Assistance Grant (STAG) funds. Because of the legal limitations on the use of STAG funds, the fiscal agent of the grant funds must be a co-regulator or consortia of co-regulators. As well, the activities funded by the Network Administration Grant must primarily benefit states and/or tribes, but not EPA. As such, the following types Network administration activities would likely be supported through the use of Grant funds: technical assistance to states/tribes on Network development; preparation of best practice / guidelines on Node development, security, and trading partner agreements; travel and other support for state members of the Board. It is assumed that the fiscal agent for Network Grant funds would retain a percentage of the grant funds to cover administration costs. The grant language would stipulate that the Board be actively involved in providing direction to the Network Administration Grant fiscal agent on the use of the Grant funds. The fiscal agent would keep the Board informed of the status of Network Administration Grant utilization (e.g., where priority support has been provided to date, remaining grant funds, etc.). These details will be finalized by the Board.

## **Draft Board Resource Need Estimates**

This section provides a rough estimate of the Board's resource needs for year one (Calendar Q1 2002 - Q1 2003). The INSG assumes that Board budget will be changed over time as the IMWG and Board

learn more. This table is intended only as a provisional draft (all costs are estimates) to provide the IMWG and Board a sense of what the Board's needs are. The estimates will require groundtruthing as the Board prepares its official budget. Overall, these costs could be lowered by delaying some guideline development, doing more in-house development (e.g., with staff – in-kind, vs. contractors), and reducing technical assistance provided to Network partners. Accelerating these activities or increasing their scope in any way will increase total costs.

These costs include the cost of the two staff FTE discussed above, staff time requirements are expected to show the same basic distribution as overall resource needs, with the exception those staff will likely perform the majority of the direct NSB support, and play only a coordinating role in the work of the Technical Resource Group. The estimated costs also include contractor support and other direct costs (e.g., travel, software purchases, etc.); include Board staff; but do *not* include in-kind contributions of state, EPA and other (e.g., Tribal) staff to participate in the Board, IMWG, EDSC, and various Action Teams. State travel costs are included, but not EPA (states will require assistance, EPA travel is considered to be an in-kind contribution). The table estimates assume that 1 FTE = \$100K and that 1 person trip = \$1000 in travel costs.

The cost-sharing column indicates who would likely take the lead in providing support (e.g., State, EPA, or Joint). Network Grants are considered part of the State contributions. This identification is partly based on the restrictions for using Network Grant (STAG) funds.

Since the Board will not be involved in Flow management or Flow-specific DET development, these costs are NOT included here. Internal Network Partner costs are also not included (e.g., cost to build a Node or create a TPA). The proposed budget

## Cost Estimates for Network Steering Board

Version 1/28/02

<b>NSB Functions and Supporting Activities</b>	<b>Year 1 Costs (in \$K)</b>	<b>Cost Sharing</b>
<b>Administration of a Registry and Repository</b>		
Mount and maintain Registry/Repository system software	50	EPA
Develop policies for Registry/Repository operation (e.g., policies for posting DETs, etc.) and document them in registry operations guidance	50	Joint
Operate and provide administrative support (e.g., receive/post DETs, etc.)	50	Joint
<b>Network Specifications, Guidance, and Best Practice Development</b>		
Develop DET Guidance, Best Practices, and Core Reference Model	250	Joint
Coordinate with EDSC on guidance for use of EDSC data standards in Network DETs and Registration of DET data elements in EDR	50	Joint
Develop Network Messaging Protocol Specification and Security Guidance	75	EPA
Conduct follow-on to Node Beta Project activities and develop Network Node technical specifications v1	125	State
Develop TPA templates and guidance	100	Joint
<b>Technical Assistance to Network Partners</b>		
Conduct an assessment of state technical assistance needs and readiness for Network participation (development of a technical assistance plan will be based on the needs identified in the readiness assessment)	50	State
Provide "techie" technical assistance to Network partners to assist with Node and flow implementation (e.g., XML training, workshops, Regional meetings)	100	State
Provide "management/organizational" technical assistance to Network partners (workshops, Regional meetings)	100	State
<b>Communications / Outreach</b>		
Coordinate in/outreach efforts, such as a speakers bureau and meetings, communications with Network partners, etc.	100	Joint
Establish and operate official Network web site for policy docs, communications, team support, library, source code repository	75	Joint
<b>Network Implementation Steering and Oversight</b>		
Complete the Implementation Plan, coordinate with the IMWG and its action teams, and develop performance measure indicators to evaluate the Network	50	Joint
Support NSB start-up, initial NSB budget development, NSB staff training, NSB workplan development.	50	
Provide administrative and logistical support for NSB oversight and steering activities including support for NSB correspondence, conference calls, and meetings	75	Joint
Handle Network Administration Grant funds and make available for NSB oversight and steering activities	60	State
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1410</b>	



## **Key Board Start-up Steps, Activities and Decisions**

The following are the key start-up steps of the Board:

- \$ Formal establishment of the Board (IMWG approves charter, and initial membership at its February 2002 meeting)
- \$ Staffing (designate and transfer Board staff)
- \$ Activate support and contract vehicles (establish operating procedure for resources and contracts via Board staff)
- \$ Organizational framework (establish desired relationships with other entities such as the EDSC, IMWG, TRG, EPA staff, States, ECOS, technology sector, NIST, etc.)
- \$ Functions (transition INSG activities to Board, assume registry/repository operational responsibilities from NIST, and initiate new Board sponsored teams and activities)

The sections below provide additional detail on the current status, next steps/activities and any remaining decisions associated with each of these transition steps. The remaining decisions will need to be resolved either by the IMWG, as the chartering organization, or by the Board itself, once it has been established.

### **Formal Establishment of the Board**

The IMWG will establish the Board by approving its charter and initial members at its February 2002 meeting. The INSG will conclude at the convening (via conference call or meeting) of the Board.

*Status and Next Steps:* IMWG approval of the Board Charter and membership

*Remaining Decisions:* None.

### **Staffing**

This transition step involves getting the Board staff members in place and in operation.

*Status and Next Steps:* This transition plan includes a basic job description for the Board staff for the IMWG to approve at the February 2002 meeting.

*Remaining Decisions/Questions:* EPA is selecting its staff person now. States will need to identify and transfer their staff person as soon as possible. The Board will need to determine how activities will keep moving forward until staff members are in place. In coordination with the EDSC, the Board will need to determine if the roles and qualifications of Board staff provide opportunities for/with the EDSC staff.

The States on the IMWG will need to determine how the Network Grant funds will support one of the Board staff and to whom that staff person will report.

### **Activating Support and Contract Vehicles**

This transition step involves securing support resources for Board activities and operations.

*Status and Next Steps:* States are in the process of finalizing the vehicle for Grant funds to support the Board.

*Remaining Decisions / Questions:* The Board will need to prepare an official budget and establish its operating procedures to direct those resources through the identified vehicles.

### **Organizational framework**

This transition step involves establishing relationships of the Board with other entities (e.g., the EDSC, IMWG, TRG, EPA staff, States, ECOS, technology sector, NIST, etc).

*Status and Next Steps:* This transition plan assumes that the Board will report to the IMWG and that the Board will establish its own subgroups or action teams. The Board will also adopt its own operating procedures.

*Remaining Decisions / Questions:* In coordination with the IMWG, the Board will need to determine what communications are necessary with Tribes and other potential Network partners and when communications should happen.

### **Ensuring that all Current INSG Functions are Appropriately Assigned**

Per the charge of the IMWG, the table below shows the assignments of current INSG functions. Note that this table does not include *new* functions identified in the Implementation Plan, which may be assigned to the Board or the IMWG.

<b>Current Major INSG Functions</b>	<b>Assignment</b>
Development of the Network Implementation Plan	Board will use the plan to develop its operating budget and workplan. Board will report regularly progress towards plan milestones and measure to the IMWG. Major revisions to the Plan will be approved by the IMWG
Coordination with CDX and other IMWG Action Teams	<p>At a high-level, the IMWG is responsible for coordination between action teams. IMWG activities in the areas of Technology Transfer, Data Quality or Broad Security issues are related to the Network but managed by the Board</p> <p>The Board will be involved, on a day-to-day level, in coordinating with other groups, including IMWG Action Teams, regarding specific Network-related activities.</p>
Sponsor the Node Beta Project	Although the Node Beta Project will be completed by the time the INSG sunsets, follow on work to the Node Beta Project, in the form of developing Network technical specifications and best practices, will be taken on by the Board and its subgroups.
Maintenance of the Network Registry / Repository	The Board will assume operational responsibilities for the Registry/Repository.
TPA development and maintenance      Guideline and	<p>The Board will likely form a subgroup to develop products including TPA templates, checklists, and guidelines / best practices for the creation and management of TPAs.</p> <p>Where development of TPAs requires or raises broader issues of policy they will be engaged by the IMWG.</p>
Assessing State readiness for Network participation	<p>The Board will conduct readiness assessments and the results to target its plans for providing limited technical assistance to Network partners.</p> <p>The IMWG may sponsor broader and additional (network and non-network) technical assistance activities.</p>
DET Harmonization	The TRG, on behalf of the Board, will continue to work on DET harmonization and related products and will coordinate with the EDSC on the development of guidelines for using EDSC data

	standards/XML in Network DETs / flows.
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